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ABSTRACT

Instructional materials are provided for a course that deals with improving assertiveness and attitude at work. Designed for use in a workplace literacy project, the course, developed by Mercer County Community College (New Jersey) and its partners, is also intended to teach students techniques of dealing with difficult people and effective listening. A one-page course outline lists objectives and provides a topical outline. Informative materials, activities, quizzes, rating scales, and articles are provided that deal with these topics: what one should know about people; self-analysis/work attitude; how people perceive others; classifying behaviors; assertiveness; what happens when one listens; effective listening; personality types; "human" rights; describing behaviors; dealing with difficult people; understanding others; assessing oneself; coping; persistence; time management; establishing priorities; priority management; good planning; external and internal time wasters; controlling priorities; handling a crisis; self-generated time wasters; resolving conflict; achieving balance; job stress; problem solving; and burnout. (YLB)

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WORK SURVIVAL 3KILLS

Prepared Under a United States Department of Education
National Workplace Literacy Program Grant to
MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Center for Training and Development
1200 Old Trenton Road
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OVERVIEW OF WORKPLACE LITERACY PROJECT

Skills for Tomorrow, NOW

The Workplace Literacy Project resulted from a Department of Education grant, plus in-kind contributions from a partnership with General Motors Inland Fisher Guide Plant, Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, and St. Francis Medical Center. The project is an attempt to find solutions to the growing "skills gap" in industry today. More than 25 million Americans cannot read the front page of a newspaper. In addition, workers whose average ages are rising, must produce in a technological environment that may not have existed when they began working. This lack of knowledge makes it difficult to compete in a technologically changing workplace. Moreover, an increasing number of immigrants have entered the workforce with limited English communication skills. In response to this growing need, the Federal government provided a grant to Mercer County Community College and its partners to develop ways to enrich and expand employees' basic workplace knowledge. The aim of the project was also to improve the self-esteem of the participants.

Support for the project was solicited from all levels of company management and the unions. In addition, an advisory council, comprising key management and employees from each company determined the design, goals, and time-frame of the project. Each company provided a liaison person from their site, and MCCC hired a director to manage the program. Employee release time for classes was site-specific.

Participation in the program was voluntary. Information about classes was disseminated through company letters, flyers, union notices, notices included with paychecks, and open forums with supervisors and employees.

The ABLE test was used for normative pre and post testing. Other types of evaluations varied from course to course. MCCC counselors met with each student to discuss present and future educational objectives.

Courses were offered in reading, business writing, math, science, and English as a Second Language. In addition, there were workshops in problem solving, stress management, and other work survival skills. The curricula for the courses were customized for each worksite to be as job focused as possible.

It is our hope that this program will serve as a model for other organizations to empower their employees with the skills needed to succeed in the changing technological workplace, today and in the future.

COURSE OUTLINE

WORK SURVIVAL SKILLS

This course deals with improving assertiveness and attitude at work. Students will learn techniques of dealing with difficult people and effective listening.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Maintain a positive attitude at work
- Express themselves in an assertive manner
- Be effective listeners
- Deal with difficult people

TOPICAL OUTLINE

- What you should know about people
- Self-analysis/work attitude scale
- How do people perceive you?
- Classifying behaviors
- Assertiveness quiz
- What happens when you listen
- Ten keys to effective listening
- Four main personality types
- Do you know your "human" rights?
- Describing behaviors
- Dealing with difficult people
- Ten rules for understanding others
- Assess yourself
- What do upset people want?
- Basic coping steps
- Persistence pays

OTHER

- hours

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PEOPLE

- PEOPLE ARE STRONGLY INTERESTED IN THEMSELVES.
- PEOPLE WANT TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.
- PEOPLE WANT TO BE WELL-LIKED.
- PEOPLE WANT TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR EFFORTS.
- PEOPLE WANT TO BE LISTENED TO.
- PEOPLE CHANGE ONLY WHEN THEY CHOOSE TO CHANGE.
- PEOPLE CAN SPOT INSINCERITY.
- PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO BE LECTURED OR PREACHED TO.
- PEOPLE DON'T LIKE ABRASIVE PEOPLE.
- PEOPLE ARE REALLY GREAT!

SELF-ANALYSIS/WORK ATTITUDE SCALE

This exercise is designed to help you measure your efforts toward achieving the best possible work attitude; and at the same time, reveal strengths and weaknesses within your personality that need attention.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. I concentrate on adjusting my attitude each morning on my way to work.	_____	_____	_____
2. I remain positive and upbeat even while working with others who may be negative.	_____	_____	_____
3. I send out positive verbal and nonverbal signals in all human interactions including the telephone.	_____	_____	_____
4. I make it a point to follow through on promises I have made.	_____	_____	_____
5. I make a serious effort to build positive working relationships with all my coworkers. I refuse to play favorites.	_____	_____	_____
6. I treat everyone with respect, despite ethnic or socio-economic differences.	_____	_____	_____
7. I work effectively with others regardless of their sexual orientation.	_____	_____	_____
8. I permit others to restore a damaged relationship with me. I don't hold a grudge; I forgive others easily.	_____	_____	_____
9. I maintain a strong relationship with my superior without alienating co-workers.	_____	_____	_____
10. I am a better than average producer while contributing to the productivity of co-workers.	_____	_____	_____
11. I refuse to initiate or circulate potentially harmful rumors.	_____	_____	_____
12. I maintain a good attendance record, including being on time to work.	_____	_____	_____
13. I show I can live up to my productivity potential without criticizing co-workers who do not live up to theirs.	_____	_____	_____

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	Always	Sometimes	Never
14. I acknowledge mistakes or misjudgements without hiding or rationalizing them.	____	____	____
15. I refuse to allow petty gripes to negatively influence my positive attitude.	____	____	____
16. I listen attentively when talking with someone.	____	____	____
17. I keep confidential information to self.			
18. I keep my business and personal relationships sufficiently separated.	____	____	____
19. I have a sense of humor and can laugh at my own mistakes without becoming defensive.	____	____	____
20. I make only positive comments about others who are not present.	____	____	____

Scoring:

5 points for "always."
3 points for "sometimes"
1 point for "never"

80 or above indicates you are doing an outstanding job of practicing personal/work attitude skills.

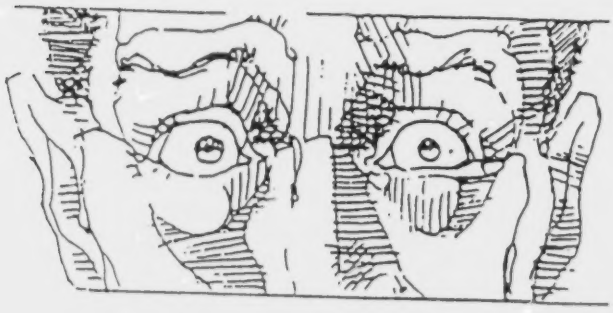
70-80 indicates that your attitude is good and that you demonstrate some fine traits.

60-70 suggests that an adjustment in your attitude could greatly improve your working relationships.

50 or below -- your progress at work is being severely restricted by your attitude.

Rate yourself on the 3 statements listed below:	HIGH (Positive) 10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	LOW (Negative) 1
a. If I were to guess, I believe my boss would rate my attitude as a . . .										
b. I believe my co-workers would rate my current attitude as a . . .										
c. I rate my enthusiasm toward my current job as a . . .										

HOW DO PEOPLE PERCEIVE YOU?



NONASSERTIVE

ASSERTIVE

AGGRESSIVE

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CLASSIFYING BEHAVIORS

YOUR ACTIONS MAY BE LABELED AS . . .

AGGRESSIVE - EXPRESS YOURSELF; DOMINATE, SET OTHERS STRAIGHT; WIN; DO IT YOUR WAY, GET WHAT YOU WANT; DISREGARD FEELINGS OF OTHERS. YOU ARE THOUGHTLESS AND RUDE; INTIMIDATING; SEND "I" MESSAGES - LOOK OUT FOR #1; OUT TO GET OWN WAY; ABRASIVE; AMBITIOUS.

NON-ASSERTIVE - DENY YOURSELF; AVOID RISKS; STAY OUT OF TROUBLE; QUIET; PUT YOURSELF DOWN; AVOID HURTING OTHERS; WANT TO BE LIKED; PUSHOVER; LOW SELF-ESTEEM; LACK CONFIDENCE; HIDE YOUR ANGER; ALLOW OTHERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU; FAILURE TO GAIN YOUR GOALS.

ASSERTIVE - EXPRESS YOURSELF IN HONEST AND DIRECT MANNER; RESPECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS; YOU CARE; FRIENDLY; CONFIDENT; COOPERATIVE; MAKE POSITIVE STATEMENTS; STAND UP FOR YOUR BELIEFS AND RIGHTS; NOT AFRAID TO CONFRONT OTHERS; NOT INTIMIDATED BY OTHERS; EQUALITY IN RELATIONSHIPS; WILL NOT PUT SELF OR OTHERS DOWN.

ASSERTIVENESS QUIZ

Before learning how to develop your assertiveness, it is important to take a few moments to get some idea of where you are right now. Answer the questions below honestly. They will help you gain some insights about your current level of assertiveness.

Assign a number to each item using this scale:

ALWAYS 5 4 3 2 1 NEVER

_____ 1. I say "No" without feeling guilty, particularly when someone asks me to do something I do not want to do.

_____ 2. I ask others to do things without feeling apologetic or anxious.

_____ 3. I confidently express my honest opinions to authority figures.

_____ 4. When I experience feelings of anger, frustration, disappointment, etc., I verbalize them easily.

_____ 5. When I express anger, I do so without blaming others for "making me mad."

_____ 6. In the last year, I have not lost control of my emotions in public.

_____ 7. When I think of annual performance reviews, I don't get nervous.

_____ 8. When I make a mistake, I acknowledge it.

_____ 9. If I disagree with the majority opinion in a meeting, I can "stick to my guns" without feeling uncomfortable or being abrasive.

_____ 10. When discussing my beliefs/opinions, I do so without labeling the opinions of others as "crazy," "stupid," "ridiculous," or "unrealistic."

_____ 11. When considering doing something I have never done, I feel confident I can learn to do it.

_____ 12. I generally have confidence in my own judgment.

_____ TOTAL SCORE (sum of the 12 numbers)

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LISTEN

- SENSING — Physically hearing the message.

- INTERPRETING — Decoding and absorbing what you hear.

- EVALUATING — Forming an opinion about the message.

- REMEMBERING — Storing the message for future reference.

- RESPONDING — Acknowledging the message by reacting in some way.

TEN KEYS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

1. WORK AT LISTENING

2. USE YOUR "DISC" DRIVE

   D = DESIRE
   I = INTEREST
   S = SELF-DISCIPLINE
   C = CONCENTRATION

3. ANTICIPATE EXCELLENCE

4. BECOME A "WHOLE BODY" LISTENER

5. CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONAL "HOT-BUTTONS

6. JUDGE CONTENT; NOT DELIVERY

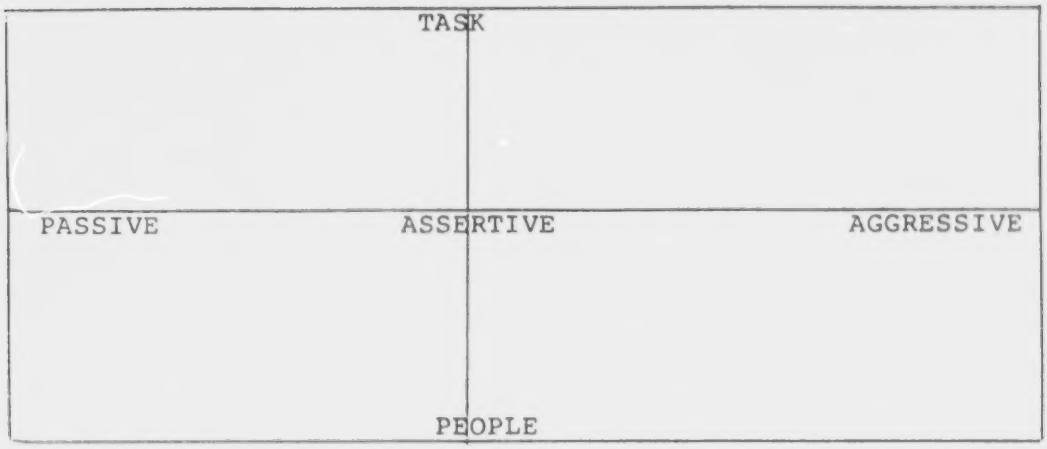
7. TAKE NOTES

8. MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT WITH SPEAKER

9. RESIST DISTRACTING SPEAKER

10. ASK QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION

FOUR MAIN PERSONALITY TYPES



FOUR BASIC INTENTS WE ALL HAVE

To get things done
To get things done right
To get along
To be appreciated

DO YOU KNOW YOUR "HUMAN" RIGHTS?

1. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE HUMAN AND TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR DECISIONS AND ACTIONS.

2. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.

3. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS YOUR OWN FEELINGS AND OPINIONS WITHOUT INTIMIDATION OR GUILT.

4. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO TELL OTHERS WHAT YOU ARE THINKING AND FEELING.

5. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE LISTENED TO AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

6. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.

7. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE MISTAKES, AS WELL AS THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG.

8. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO SAY, "I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER."

9. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY "NO" WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY.

10. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR INFORMATION FROM PROFESSIONALS OR THOSE IN AUTHORITY.

11. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT NOT TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS.

12. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT NOT TO ASSERT YOURSELF.

DESCRIBING BEHAVIORS

Describe the behaviors of three people listed below that make you feel that they are "difficult people." Be specific about the things they do and/or say that would make you classify them as difficult--do so without naming the people.

Person #1

Person #2 Someone who works with you (supervisor, peer)

Person #3 Someone in your personal life

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

CASE STUDY

Jill recently completed her Associates Degree in Office Technology and was immediately assigned to the front office.

Jill received many compliments on her work from her supervisor. In addition, she was able to build good relationships with all her co-workers except Ms. Brownhill. Ms. Brownhill was a long-time employee of the school and very critical of Jill. She was constantly making unkind and seemingly uncalled for remarks about Jill.

One day Jill decided to do something about it. By checking around, she discovered that two previous employees had resigned because of Ms. Brownhill. This made Jill feel that there was nothing personal about the trouble she was having. With this in mind, she waited for the right opportunity to meet Ms. Brownhill alone, and this is what she said:

"Ms. Brownhill, I have been here for two months, and I seem to be getting along with everyone but you. I like my job and want to keep it. If I have done something to offend you, please tell me, and I'll certainly make a change. I want very much to win your respect, but I do not intend to put up with your unfair treatment of me any longer."

1. What are your reactions to Jill's approach?

2. Do you think she got the desired results she was after?

3. Could she have handled it differently?

4. What results might she have obtained?

TEN RULES FOR UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

1. BE SURE YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS
2. LOOK FOR GOOD IN OTHERS
3. AVOID EXPECTING PEOPLE TO BE PERFECT
4. DEVELOP A FEELING OF EMPATHY
5. AVOID STRESS-CAUSERS BY CONTROLLING YOUR ATTITUDE
6. DON'T BLAME YOURSELF BUT DON'T BLAME OTHERS, EITHER
7. LEARN TO LISTEN ATTENTIVELY
8. GET ALL THE FACTS
9. EXPRESS APPRECIATION - LET PEOPLE FEEL IMPORTANT
10. BE PATIENT

ASSESS YOURSELF

Take the following quiz to assess your skills in calming upset people.

Score 1=Never 2=Rarely 3=Sometimes 4=Usually 5=Always

_____ I feel I can calm most upset people

When I'm with an upset person, I

_____ stay calm
_____ don't interrupt
_____ focus on his/her concern without getting distracted
_____ respond to personal accusations without becoming defensive
_____ reduce distractions of paperwork and telephone
_____ have attentive body posture
_____ have appropriate facial expressions
_____ have confident eye contact
_____ listen completely before responding
_____ take notes when appropriate
_____ show empathy
_____ let him/her know I want to help
_____ know when to call on my supervisor for help
_____ have a confident, helpful tone of voice
_____ use words that don't escalate his/her anger
_____ avoid blaming my fellow workers or school for causing the problem

After the upset person leaves, I:

_____ am in control of my emotions
_____ don't repeat the story more than once
_____ analyze what I did well and what I'd do differently

Your Score:

81-100 = Excellent
61-80 = Good
41-60 = You need to hone your skills
21-40 = You may need to ask your supervisor for help.

To make sure you have a realistic view of your skills, ask you co-worker to evaluate you based on their observations of how you work with upset people.

WHAT DO UPSET PEOPLE WANT?

Upset customers may want a variety of responses from you:

* to be taken seriously
* to be treated with respect
* to get immediate action
* to gain compensation/restitution
* to have the party who wronged them reprimanded and/or punished
* to clear up the problem so it never happens again
* to be listened to

MORE WORDS TO WATCH

Use Verbal Cushions--Show Empathy

* Verbal cushions let people know that you can understand why he/she would be upset. You also acknowledge his/her right to feel that way.

* Use the Three **F's**: Feel, Felt, Found
  This response acknowledges the person's feelings and offers an explanation in a way he/she can listen to:

  "I understand how you could feel that way. Others have felt that way too. And then they found, after an explanation, that this guideline protected them, so it made sense."

* Get Clarification--paraphrase what he/she is saying. Take the blame if there is miscommunication. Make sure you understand the concern before you try to solve it.

* Form a Team--let him/her that the two of you are working together on a solution, rather than Him/Her vs. You.
  "United we stand, divided we fall."

ADDITIONAL POINTERS

* Time Out

* How to Get People's Attention

* Crying

* If the Person is Obstinate

* Polite Repetition

* Dealing with Violence

BASIC COPING STEPS

The six fundamental steps below will help you to cope successfully, no matter what type of difficult person you need to deal with.

1. Assess The Situation

2. Stop Wishing They Were Different

3. Try To View The Difficult Behavior Objectively

4. Formulate A Coping Strategy

5. Implement Your Plan

6. Monitor Your Progress And Modify Your Plan As Required

SIGNS OF DE-ESCALATION: A decrease in the level of conflict

- o Listening and trying to understand
- o Showing tact and concern for the other person's feeling
- o Appeals to de-escalate
- o Goodwill gestures
- o Airing feelings
- o Finding alternatives

Coping with Specific Styles

THE BOMB

- o Give them time to run down and regain self-control on their own
- o If they don't, break into their tantrum
- o Show that you take them seriously
- o If needed and possible, get some private time with them

THE COMPLAINER

- o Listen to their complaints even if you feel guilty or impatient
- o Acknowledge what they're saying by paraphrasing
- o Check your perception.
- o Don't agree with or apologize for their allegations
- o Avoid the accusation-defense-reaccusation pattern
- o State and acknowledge facts without comment
- o Try to move to a problem-solving pattern

THE "NO" PERSON

- o Don't get drawn into their negativism
- o Be realistic and optimistic
- o Don't try to argue them out of negativism
- o Don't offer solutions too quickly
- o Evaluate worst-case happenings
- o Avoid creating more negativism

THE KNOW-IT-ALL

- o Do your homework
- o Listen carefully and ensure understanding
- o Ask questions but avoid confrontation
- o Avoid being another know-it-all

- o State the facts in an alternative way
- o Give the phoney a way out
- o Work with them in private

THE PROCRASTINATOR

- o Help them discuss conflicts or reservations that prevent decision making
- o Once issues surface, deal with them
- o Remember, you're not the problem
- o Give support
- o Follow through on their actions

References

Bramson, Robert M., Coping with Difficult People, New York: Dell Publishing, 1981
Chapman, Elwood N., Your Attitude is Showing, Fifth Edition, Chicago: SRA, 1987

PERSISTENCE PAYS

Be ready to persist in your coping efforts. Remember that quickly becoming fed up with difficult people is a very human reaction--most people do. That is why difficult behavior "works," at least in the short run. Enjoin yourself to stay with the effort. Persistence is more important to effective coping than the skill or comfort with which you carry out the methods.

1. Describe in as much detail as possible the behavior of a person who you find difficult?

2. Write down briefly your understanding of that behavior.

3. Think now of your past behavior as you have interacted with that person. Describe in as much detail as you can. Have there been times and/or situations in which the interaction seemed better? Worse?

4. Now think of the coping behaviors most likely to be useful with the difficult person you have described. Consider that some behavior represents a mixture of defensive reactions. What have you tried that seemed to work? What has not worked?

5. In what area(s) do you need skill/practice in coping?

6. Action Plan: Identify the difficult people in your life with whom you need to cope; develop a coping strategy and implement it; set a deadline, and expect results after a predetermined period of time has elapsed. If you do not achieve the desired results in that period of time, rethink your plan and try again.

Dealing with tough people

By MICHAEL KINSMAN
Copley News Service

Difficult people are a fact of life in the workplace.

These are people who create roadblocks for their bosses, their peers or their subordinates. Sometimes these people are just difficult with themselves, causing their own productivity or performance to skid.

"Difficult people are everywhere," says Judith Enns, a Southern California personnel consultant. "We have to live with them."

Enns says most of us make the mistake that when we run into difficult co-workers we try to change them. That, she says, is beyond the scope of our responsibility and expertise as peers.

"When it comes to difficult people, we seem to have a magical wish that 'If they could just be different.'" Enns says. "The reality is that these people are not going to change."

The difficult ones are easy to point out. They're the ones that avoid making decisions, object to any suggestion, don't produce, complain incessantly, badger and take potshots at others or sometimes just don't talk to others.

So how do we deal with them?

USUALLY, the wrong way.

A natural tendency is to meet force with more force. The results often are counterproductive, Enns says.

"Instead of using more of the same, sometimes we need to change our strategy," she says. That includes looking at ourselves to determine whether we might just be part of the problem.

Enns said it's nearly impossible to hide your feelings when you encounter difficult fellow employees.

When dealing with these people, it is very easy to fall into the trap of being indirect or condescending in our comments to them.

"I don't think it's realistic in our work world to get along with everyone," Enns says. "But we have to work with everyone whether we want to or not."

Since there is no luxury in choosing the people you will work with, Enns says you'd better make amends to deal with difficult people the best you can.

When you bump up against co-workers you don't like or respect, Enns says you have to summon the self-discipline to deal forthrightly with them.

Don't clash with them because that will drive them farther away. Don't tiptoe around them because that just lets the problem fester and doesn't solve anything.

Her solution? Pay attention to how you deal with difficult people.

Enns says that many of us find ourselves simply restating our demands when we meet obstinate co-workers, rather than attempting to find out why barriers exist.

"When it comes to peers, we sometimes make a request that others don't see the value in," she says. "We need to back up and show them the value that will come from that particular project. We shouldn't assume that others are going to instantly recognize why something has to be done."

BY BENDING, we may find that our co-workers are not nearly as difficult as we once believed, says Enns.

But there are still bound to be those moments of frustration when you lock horns with someone you work with. Enns says you can't avoid it, but you can be prepared.

Throughout your dealing with people, you compile a subconscious list of what works and what doesn't with difficult people. When you meet up with someone you have difficulty with, Enns says it should be a learning experience.

"I think the more we mentally rehearse or review situations, the better equipped we will be to deal with these people," Enns said.

By paying attention to our successes and defeats with difficult co-workers, we can develop strategies handy for the next time we feel the tension build with a peer.

"It's better to be prepared," Enns says, "because when we meet these people we tend to rely on the tactics that first enter our minds."

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The monster boss

How to cope with (even conquer) this brazen breed of manager

by Pamela Kramer

Oblivious or obnoxious, the monster boss terrorizes underlings. Whether he (or she) communicates like a drill sergeant, snatches credit for a job well-done, or is downright incompetent, encounters with this breed of animal can leave you stammering, with your ego drooping low. If you are the unfortunate victim of an impossible boss, fear not. You can survive the ordeal and even come out of it with valuable on-the-job skills.

Pam, a 10-year veteran with a television sales firm, works for a boss who rules by terror. "If you don't improve, you're outta' here," he bellows daily.

On one occasion, Pam was on a sales call when her boss rang her client to demand she return to the office immediately to correct a blunder, muttering, "I don't know how she could have been so stupid."

"I was humiliated," Pam recalls. "Getting bawled out in my client's office, I felt like a kid with an angry parent."

What's going on in the mind of this guy? Less than it seems. Bosses who rule through intimidation are often unaware of how their tactics affect the morale of an employee. To survive such assaults, it's important not to respond in kind. "If your boss has had a bad day, acknowledge it, but don't lower yourself to his or her level," says Lois Hart, president of Leadership Dynamics in Boulder, Colorado. "As with any relationship, you can't change the other person, you can only change your response." Getting defensive or critical won't do you any good. What will help is to confront—not ignore—outbursts.

Says Pam, "When I first started working for Matthew, I spent many an evening in tears or complaining to my friends and family about the horrors of my day. But I've been confronting him for two years now. I tell him he's unreasonable. And I offer suggestions about how to handle the situation more effectively. I've become much stronger. I no longer take each outburst personally. As a result, even in my personal life, I'm better able to deal directly with confrontations that come up."

Anna has a boss who lives to work. If the 29-year-old administrative assistant works from nine to nine, her boss quips, "What? Another half-day?" Anna learned quickly that for her supervisor, there's no life outside the office. One Valentine's Day, Anna was called into her boss's office at precisely 6 p.m. for an "urgent project." She asked that the task be put off until morning and offered to come in early to make up time. "Absolutely not," her boss replied. "We've got to get this out tonight." She returned home late that evening to droopy flowers and an angry boyfriend.

Some managers have no regard for personal commitments, like when a child is sick or a family crisis occurs. So, if you are better suited to a nine-to-five job, you may be wise to switch, not fight. If your boss gives you no credit for all the extra hours you have put in, she may not be worth staying for.

Some impossible bosses are not loud or jarring; their style is to manipulate with a smile. Rita, an office manager, is expected to respond to cheery requests to pick up her boss's lunch or make his social dinner reservations.

Running personal errands should fall under the category of "favor" rather than "duty." If your boss expects you to pick up dry cleaning or exchange a shirt, make it clear you are performing a gesture of goodwill. "I don't mind picking up your lunch because it is on my way" should alert your boss that this is a personal kindness. If such favors interfere with your job performance, sit down with your boss and reassess exactly what is expected of you.

The lazy boss, in many ways, is even more difficult than the screamer or manipulator. Kathleen, a secretary at a large university, has such a boss. She sits in her office twirling her hair, chatting on the phone, while her employees scramble to get the work done. When Kathleen overheard her supervisor lamenting that a financial project might interfere with her plan to take a personal day, Kathleen knew she'd inherit the assignment. Sure enough, the next morning the folder was on her desk. Attached was a note, "Could you make sense of this?" signed with a smiley face. After six months on the job, Kathleen's workload had increased threefold, and the more she did, the more she was expected to do.

If your boss wants you to do all the work, document exactly what you've done. With a list in front of you, it is easier to confront the malingerer. Down the road, it may help in getting a promotion.

Ultimately, there are monster bosses and there are *truly* impossible bosses. The onus is on you to decide if your job is worth keeping. If you are miserable and the job isn't taking you anywhere anyway, no amount of talking or negotiation will make you happy. But if your two years as office manager are an important step up the ladder, try to tough it out. ◆

Help is a phone call away

If your boss has you down, tap the resources of 9 to 5, a national membership group combining research, education and grass-roots activism to support women office workers. Call its toll-free hot line, 1-800-245-9TO5, Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Wednesday, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. EST. A trained job counselor can advise you on problem bosses and other job-related issues. For a free survival guide, write P.O. Box 14567, Cleveland, OH 44114.

Illustration Jennifer Oppenheimer

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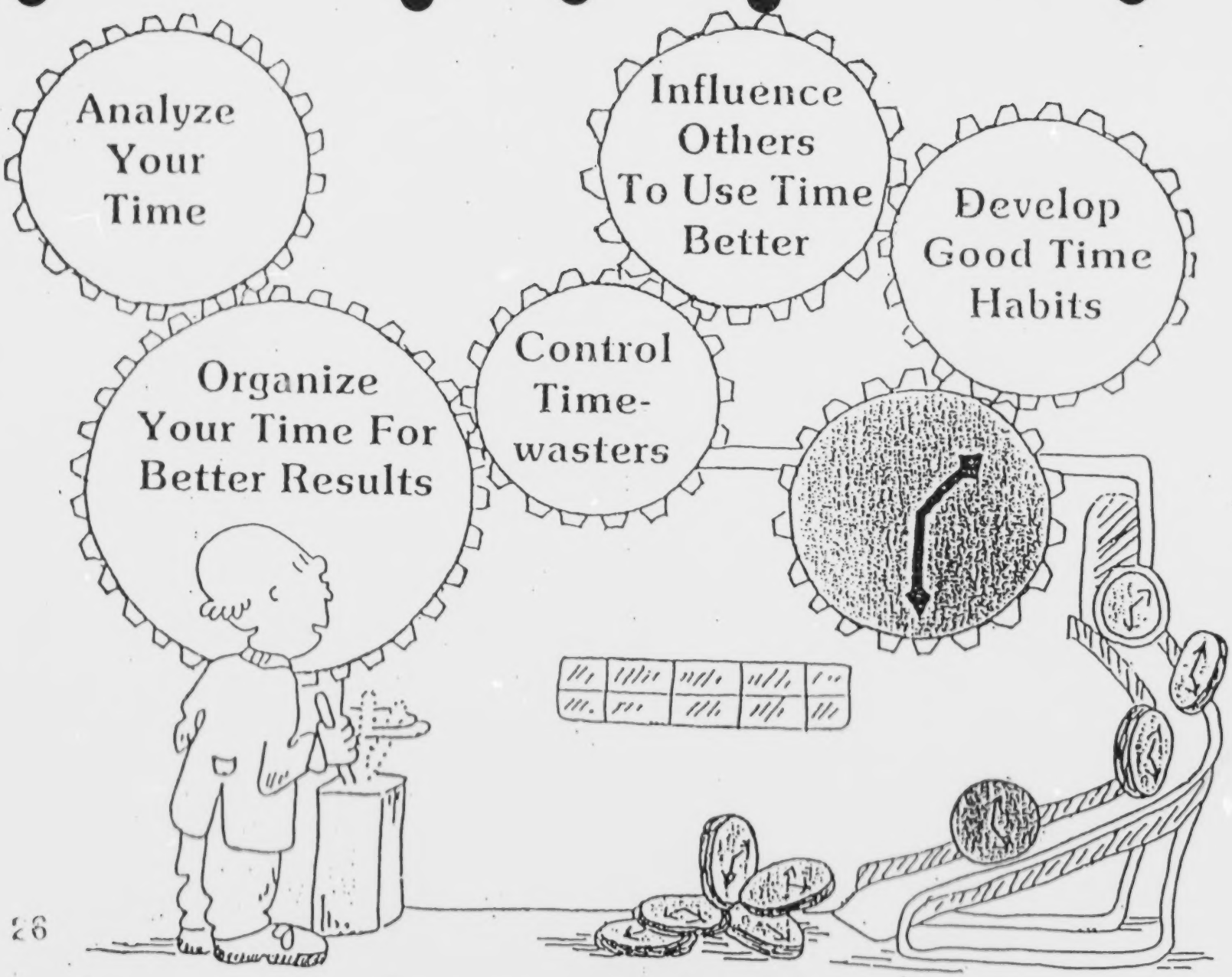
Analyze Your Time
Influence Others To Use Time Better
Develop Good Time Habits
Organize Your Time For Better Results
Control Time-wasters

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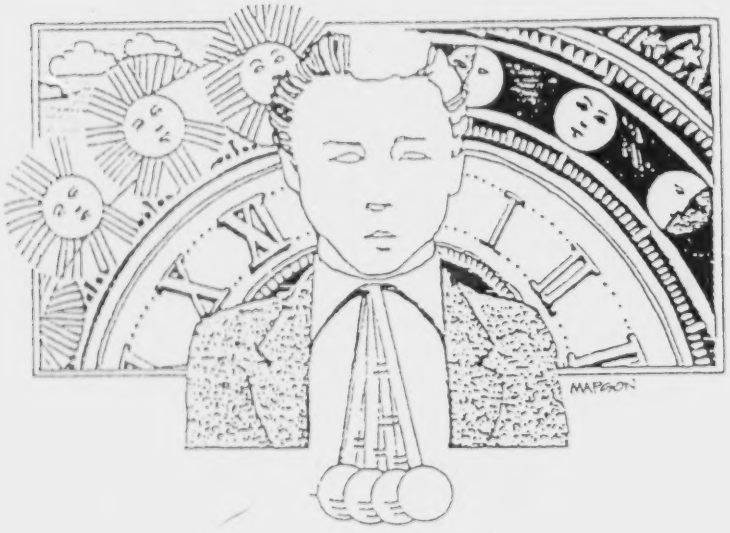
WHAT CONTROLS YOUR TIME?

The best starting place to improve your use of time is to determine the extent to which you control the time available to you. No one has total control over a daily schedule. Someone or something will always make demands. However, everyone has some control, and probably more than they realize.

Some time is ("working hours") regulated and should be used for those activities. Even within this structured time, there are opportunities to select which tasks or activities to handle and what priority to assign to that task. It is the exercise of these discretionary choices that allow you to control your time.



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SELF ASSESSMENT INVENTORY FOR
IMPROVING TIME MANAGEMENT

Instructions: Read each item, then check the column opposite each statement that best describes the frequency with which you participate in the activity mentioned. Work quickly. First impressions are usually quite accurate.

	Most of the Time	Quite Often	Some-times	Rarely or Never
1. I am able to control my own time and the way I use it.				
2. I am able to prevent interruptions from my co-workers.				
3. I avoid interrupting my co-workers unnecessarily.				
4. I deal with my incoming work quickly and efficiently.				
5. I am able to avoid telephone interruptions when I need to.				
6. I return telephone messages promptly.				
7. I do not waste time because of poorly designed systems in the organization.				
8. I stick to the tasks assigned and avoid spending time doing "busy work."				
9. I make appointments with people I need to talk to, both inside and outside the organization.				
10. I try not to attend low priority meetings that will take up a lot of my time.				
11. I try not to let my work accumulate in piles on my desk, by the phone, etc.				
12. I do not procrastinate and I complete my work on time.				
13. I delegate what work I can and should to others.				
14. I make a list of prioritized tasks to be accomplished.				
15. I set reasonable objectives with specific time limits for completion.				
16. I accomplish my responsibilities on time.				
17. I accomplish my work within normal working hours.				
18. I stop to consider if I am working on the right thing, in the right way, right now.				

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In establishing priorities, first:

FIND OUT WHAT TASKS AND RESULTS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND YOUR EMPLOYER

Because you can't do everything at once, you need to make decisions about what to do first, second, and so on, and what can wait for later.

If you don't stop and set priorities, they set themselves. Some of the inefficient ways priorities get set:

"Squeaky wheel gets the grease" approach--who ever bugs you the most gets your time.

"Last in, first out" approach--whatever task has been requested most recently.

"Do what I like best" approach--whatever you enjoy the most gets done first.

All approaches have one major problem--really important work may not be getting done. While it takes planning to determine order of importance for tasks, the payoff is worth it.

You have the satisfaction of knowing you've applied your best efforts to areas where results really count.

You help your boss and your coworkers realize the responsibilities you are juggling. They can help you avoid conflicting priorities when they are aware of what expectations others have of you.

START ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

Clarify with your boss, what duties your job includes. Be sure to include not only what your boss expects of you, but also the expectations of coworkers and perhaps even people in other departments. With your boss, decide while tasks are most (and least) important to your job.

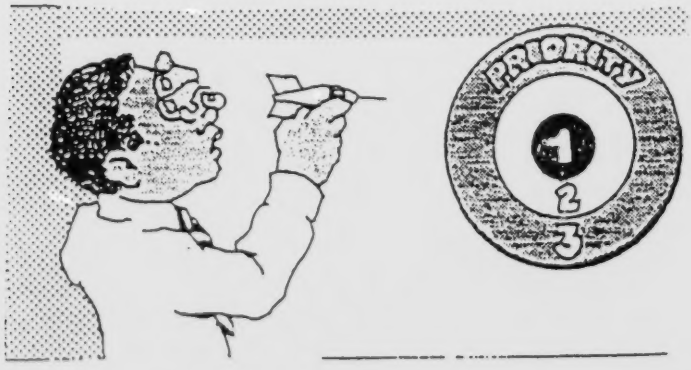
Prepare questions before talking with people, ask:

What things are important for them to receive
In what priority order
On what time schedule
With what quality

Whenever a new request comes your way, try to get an idea on how important it is in comparison with your other duties. If doing one task now means putting off another task until later, be sure that whoever is affected by your decision is informed and agrees.

On occasion you may find that two people or more are asking you to do different things at the same time, and you can't see a way to meet the needs of both. When these kinds of conflicting priorities arise, it is best if you ask the different people to get together, discuss their needs, and work out a solution.

You need to set up a clear picture of what has to be done when.



WHAT TO DO AND WHEN TO DO IT

You'll be able to scrutinize daily and weekly pressures, and get more done if you follow these two important, but unusual rules:

1. Don't DO first things first! Never work from the top sheet down in your basket. Instead, locate the most vital and worthwhile task, and set them up to do in the BEST, NOT the EARLIEST slots in the day. Later may be better than earlier, provided you can guarantee making your deadline.

2. Priority setting has NOTHING to do with scheduling. Your question is WHETHER to do a task, not WHEN to do it.

Once you've decided the task is VALUABLE, OR A "MUST" ... then, and only then can you let URGENCY tie-break between equally worthwhile tasks. URGENCY can NEVER rule between a high-value and a low-value task.

You have "A" risks and "B" risks; therefore, the urgency tie-breaks between any

TWO _____'s

or

TWO _____'s

but never

BETWEEN

_____ and _____.

MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS IN SETTING PRIORITIES

Identifying the priority of job tasks should not be the result of an administrative assistant's likes or dislikes. Rather, it is based on the elements of time and importance. Lillian H. Chaney has identified several considerations which should be used to establish the priority of work:

1. How soon is the material needed? An agenda for a meeting to be held later in the day obviously takes priority over typing a report which is schedules to go out within a week.

2. Are other people involved? If so, are there deadlines to be met? When others are involved, it is helpful to find out the approximate length of time required by each to avoid last-minute delay.

3. How long will the job take? Completion time for transcribing dictation may be easier to estimate than composing assignments.

4. Can similar activities be grouped and time saved by handling them together? Copying and duplicating projects can often be grouped as can errands outside the office.

5. Which of the projects, if any require employer consultation? When will the employer be available Make a list of questions to avoid repeated queries and interruptions.

6. Can the job be delegated? Is anyone available? If there are a large number of delegable tasks and no one to whom they may be assigned, mention this to the employer so that this will be a consideration in future hirings.

7. What is the most efficient way of getting the job done? A few changes on a report should not necessitate retyping it in its entirety. Cutting, pasting, and photocopying will make quick work of the job. Answer memos right on the original when appropriate.

Establishing priorities in the use of time is a two-step process:

1. Listing the things that need to be done.
2. Prioritizing items on the list.

Use the ABC method to determine your priorities once you understand your boss's expectations. Place each item on your list into one of the following categories:

*Priority A--"Must do": These are the critical items. Some may fall in this category because of management directives, important customer requirements, significant deadlines, or opportunities for success or advancement.

*Priority B--"Should do": These are items of medium value. Items in this category may contribute to improved performance but are not essential or do not have critical deadlines.

*Priority C--"Nice-to-do": This is the lowest value category. While interesting or fun, they could be eliminated, postponed, or scheduled for slack periods.

Your A's, B's, and C's are flexible depending on the date your list is prepared. Priorities change over time. Today's B's may be tomorrow's "A" as an important deadline approaches. Likewise, today's "A" may become tomorrow's "C," if it did not get accomplished in time and/or circumstances change.

Obviously, it is not worthwhile to spend considerable time on a task of modest value. On the other hand, a project of high value is worth the time invested. Only good planning will allow you to reap the benefits of time wisely invested.

MY PRIORITIES FOR THE DAY

Priority A--Must Do

Priority B--Should Do

Priority C--Nice To Do

MY PRIORITIES FOR THE WEEK

Priority A--Must Do

Priority B--Should Do

Priority C--Nice To Do

PRIORITY MANAGEMENT:

WORKING WITH MORE THAN ONE MANAGER

Design a system for your time priority between mangers A, B, and C.

Rule #1: Your primary manager has priority.

Rule #2: First come, first serve.

Rule #3: A rule for the rule breaker -- if manager A wants to bump manager B's work, manager A's work must be initialed by manager B.

Note: This might not work in your corporate climate; however, give it a go and see what happens.

ESSENTIAL OF PLANNING

Finding the answer to Why, What, When, How, Who, and Where is vital to good planning:

WHY... is the project being done: purposes, values, scope, and objectives.

WHAT... is the project: what is to be accomplished and what is required to do it.

WHEN... is the project to be done: day and hour deadlines.

HOW... shall the project be accomplished: best methods and tools.

WHO... is involved: administrative and supervisory channels.

WHERE... is the project to be done: provisions for space.

PRIME TIME

When considering a daily schedule, it's a good idea to keep your energy cycle in mind. Some people are at their best early in the morning. Others peak in the afternoon. Whenever possible, try to plan your daily schedule to match your "prime time." You will not always have control but consider such ideas as reading, responding to mail, or returning phone calls after lunch if your "prime time" is in the morning.

CHART YOUR ENERGY CYCLE

Fill in the beginning and ending time of your day on the following diagram. Then draw a line through the day reflecting your typical energy cycle.

1. Do you arrange your workday to take advantage of your energy cycle?

2. What could you do differently to better utilize your period of peak energy?

EXTERNAL & INTERNAL TIME WASTERS

Select the things that interfere with your ability to get the job done. Add any that do not appear in the listing, Place a check mark next to the ones.

1. External Time Wasters

Which of the following are not of your job responsibility or are thwarting your own time management because you have no control over them?

	INTERFERENCE YES	NO
socializing in the office		
telephone interruptions		
too many meetings		
personal interruptions		
work conditions		
ineffective systems		
incomplete information presented for problem solving		
being understaffed		
unclear objectives established by superiors		
short, unrealistic deadlines		
employees with personal problems		
trying to get others' cooperation		
unscheduled visitors		
too much travel		
too much trivia		
poor filing system		
getting others to meet deadlines		
deficiency of managerial tools or personnel		
poor paperwork flow system		
unnecessary memo writing		
scattered responsibility for many projects		
poor communication		
too much time spent on crises caused by others		
motivating others		
long commutes		
not being properly organized so routine tasks take too long		
not using a "TO DO" list, no objective		
making errors in your work		
skipping from one tasks to another		
not being decisive		
office equipment that doesn't work or is out of date		
"Bureaucratic red tape"		
other		

2. Personal Time Wasters

Which of the following are rendering you ineffective in your own time management?

	INTERFERENCE YES	NO
lack of planning		
lack of priorities		
overcommitment		
negative procrastination		
indecision or postponed meetings		
shuffling paper		
slow reading skills		
failure to delegate		
slow starting		
lack of self-discipline		
inconsistent actions		
snap decisions		
confusion caused by mass of postponed work		
lack of self-motivation		
uncertainty about how to proceed or take action		
physical or mental exhaustion		
a boss that doesn't keep you informed		
instructions that are not clear or misleading		
having a messy desk or work area		
day dreaming		
not being able to say "NO" when you should		
being interrupted by your boss		
having a disorganized boss		
no clear, organized office procedures		
too much managing of your job by your boss		
other		

3. How can you control or eliminate your own time wasters?

CONTROLLING PRIORITIES

Even the best time managers are interrupted and have crises--this is part of a normal day. It is a key problem in managing multiple priorities. But, we must think of the interruptions as "part of my job." When we take this attitude productivity goes down. What we have to do is learn to manage these interruptions and crises.

ACCEPT THE NON-CONTROLLABLE AND CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLE

If you think of a normal day as a jigsaw puzzle, it will help you develop the attitude that it is your job to be interrupted. It will help you to keep the interruptions shorter. It will remind you to say "no" sometimes. It will help you to remember to practice prevention and turn a crisis into an opportunity.

Here are some tips on handling the interruptions.

1. **To keep the interruption short:**

   a. Set a time limit--stick to it.
      Say, "I don't have a minute, but I have 5."
      Start a 3-minute timer.
   b. Set the stage in advance. You're truly busy.
   c. Tell phone caller about your A-1 priority.
   d. Keep pencil in hand.
   e. Keep your hands on the typewriter.
   f. With dropper-inners, stay standing--if they sit, you sit on the desk.
   g. Meet in other person's office. (You can leave.)
   h. Meet visitors in conference room or reception area--or in the hall.
   i. Avoid small talk when busy--makes large interruptions.

2. **People interruptions:**

   a. Try not to feel annoyed.
   b. Give interrupter undivided attention. Listen carefully.
   c. Don't interrupt.
   d. Don't let your mind drift--it's time consuming.
   e. Get them to the point. You might ask, what is your problem with this? What is the main purpose of our meeting? Say "no" if they ask too much.

   On the other hand:

   f. Don't let them go away empty handed. Promise to do it later. Explain your working on other priorities. Tell them who else they might call (but be firm too).
   g. Other things to say to keep it short:
      Could we continue this, when I'm not so swamped?
      On the phone--I've got it down--be back to you.
      Why don't we put all this in a memo.
      I won't take any more of your time now.

Or
Glance at the clock a few times.
Tell them of your 2 pm appointment.
Stand up. Hold out your hand.
Ease them toward the door.
Say "Well, that does it!"

3. Get back on track after interruptions (don't lose momentum)

HANDLING A CRISIS

Here are some ways for your to take control of a crisis.

1. Some don'ts:

   a. Come unglued; lose your cool. It just makes things worse. It makes enemies.
   b. Be more concerned about what people will think of you than coping with the problem.
   c. Throw good priority management out the window.

2. Some do's:

   a. Use energy to find solutions (not for yelling).
   b. Think about the problem, not your performance.
   c. Take a moment to think. Consider your options. Run the crisis.
   d. Try to relax before tackling the problem--prepare mentally.
   e. Continue delegating what you can.
   f. Get a plan of action.
   g. Take it in stride.

3. "Turn a crisis into an opportunity."

   Of course, plan to prevent recurring crises--but you can't prevent them all--it takes too much time. Consider it an opportunity to try new ideas and methods to solve the crisis:

   Shortcuts, better procedures, quicker ways, residual benefits.
   Contingency plan that deals with a similar crisis.
   Learn about ourselves; grow and develop.

   We also can learn to think fast under pressure.

   Ask questions.
   Admit you don't know.
   Focus full attention on the problem.

Practice prevention. Do more than survive interruptions and crises.

1. Prevent interruptions:

   a. Reorganize work area. Make it less accessible. Not too many chairs (or too near the desk). Keep a clock in a prominent place.
   b. Drown out exterior noise. Try ear plugs.
   c. Turn down volume of phone bell.
   d. "Do not disturb" sign on your door--or try a humorous sign.
   e. An "open door" policy can be a time killer.
   f. Remove yourself. Go to a conference room or library.
   g. Ask someone else to take calls and screen visitors--decide who can interrupt and who can't.
   h. Tell people what you're doing.

2. **Beware of yourself.**

   a. Do you panic if the phone doesn't ring? Have telephone itch? Tell people, "call me any time?"
   b. Take trips to the coffee machine or water cooler?
   c. Start another project before you finish one?
   d. Pass on gossip?
   e. Tell people your personal troubles--so you have to listen to theirs?
   f. Do you eavesdrop? Encourage dropper-inners?
   g. Keep people too long at a meeting?
   h. Friends and family call you too often? You call them too often?

3. **More ways to prevent interruptions:**

   a. Hold calls for 2 hours a day to work on your A-1 priority.
   b. Only accept calls during announced hours--same for visitors.
   c. Keep a visitor and telephone interruption log. Study it. Spot the interruptions.
   d. Have regular morning meetings with your boss--go over "to do" lists.
   e. Ask interruptors to write it down, the problem and solution. This will help you stop half the interruptions.

4. **Reduce crises:**

   a. Practice good time management.
      To do lists
      ABC priorities
      Don't procrastinate
   b. Anticipate known deadlines. Don't put off to the last minute.
   c. Check with boss. Can you improve performance?
   d. Have a fire prevention list. Analyze the crisis--make contingency plans. Anticipate the crisis. Cross train. Key people not available.

SELF-GENERATED TIME WASTERS

DISORGANIZATION: Disorganization is a key culprit for wasted time. Evidence of disorganization shows up in the layout of a work area. If time is spent searching for misplaced item; or wasted due to distractions which cause you to start and stop several times before a task is completed then you need to evaluate your work area.

Focus on your desk. Is your work area cluttered? "A place for everything and everything in its place," is the best advice for organizing information you need.

Finally, organize your approach to work. Practice completing your tasks. If interrupted, do not immediately jump to a new task. First, assess the priority of a request, and avoid getting involved in any new activity until it becomes top priority. If an interruption comes by phone or personal visit, simply return to the task you were working on as soon as the interruption ends.

PROCRASTINATION: We all put things off. Typically, these items include boring, difficult, unpleasant, or onerous tasks that ultimately need completing. When this happens to you, consider the following ideas:

* Set a deadline to complete the task and stick to it.
* Build in a reward system. For example, tell yourself" "When I finish that task I'm going to enjoy a nice meal with my special other." "Or, I won't go home until I finish this task."
* Arrange with someone (an associate, secretary, etc.) to routinely follow up with you about progress on tasks you tend to put off.
* Do undesirable tasks early in the day so you can be done with them.

Dealing With Procrastination

____ Set a deadline.

____ Set up a reward system.

____ Arrange for follow-up

____ Do it first

____ Break job into small pieces

INABILITY TO SAY "NO": At some point, we all have demands on our time which exceed our ability to accommodate them. Here is where learning to say "No" will come to the rescue. When you take on more than you can handle, your quality will suffer and you are better off to take on only what you can comfortably handle.

Saying "No" doesn't need to offend. One approach is to offer an alternative. Rather than saying "Yes" too often, try some of the following responses:

*"I can take care of that but what I'm doing now will be delayed. Is your request more important?"

*"I'll be glad to handle that for you. However, I can't get to it until I finish what I'm doing. That will be ..."

*"I'm sorry I don't have time to take on any new work. I'll call you when my schedule frees up."

*"I appreciate your vote of confidence but just can't work it into my schedule at this time. Sorry."

*"I'm sorry, I just can't do it. Have you considered asking..."

LACK OF INTEREST (ATTITUDE): If you waste time simply because of a lack of interest you should investigate alternatives that may be open to you. Some ideas are:

*Consider ways to make your work more interesting.

*See if you can swap tasks with a co-worker for better variety.

*Ask about reorganizing your work or sharing it.

*Reread the suggestions under procrastination.

CASE STUDY: ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE

It was 7:20 a.m. when Marion arrived at the office. She was early because she wanted to clear the backlog of work that had been piling up on her desk. She turned on the lights and started to go through yesterday's mail. As she read the first piece, she realized she couldn't deal with it until a colleague arrived. She set it aside and went to the next. This item had potential application to a project she was working on, so she walked down the hall and made a copy for her personal use.

As she continued reading her mail she came across a journal article of particular interest and became engrossed in it. She was startled to find as she looked up that others were arriving and it was nearly 9:00 o'clock.

She quickly pushed the remaining mail to a corner of her desk and reached for a project file due tomorrow with at least two days' worth yet to be completed. As she opened the file, Bill and Claire stopped by and invited her to join them for coffee. Marion decided she could spare ten minutes. Bill and Claire were both anxious to share the details of a play they attended last night. Before Marion realized it, thirty minutes had passed and she hurried back to her office.

As Marion entered her office, the phone rang. It was Mr. Wilson, her manager. There was a meeting scheduled at 10:00. Could Marion sit in for him? There was something to be discussed that the department should know about. Marion looked at her watch. There wasn't enough time to get started on the project so she pushed the file aside and vowed to start it immediately after lunch.

The afternoon wasn't any better. A few visitors, a few phone calls, a couple of letters, and the day was over. Nothing had been accomplished on the project that was due tomorrow. As she stuffed papers into her briefcase, she wondered how Bill and Claire were able to attend plays during the evening.

Examine Marion's use of time:

1. Did she make good use of prime time? _____
2. Was she working on her highest priority task? _____
3. Did she seem able to say "No"? _____
4. Did she practice task completion? _____
5. Does she seem to understand her problem? _____

USING TIME PRODUCTIVELY

Ten useful tips on effective time management:

1. Consolidate similar tasks.
2. Tackle tough jobs first.
3. Delegate work and develop others.
4. Learn to use idle time.
5. Get control of the paper flow.
6. Avoid the cluttered-desk syndrome.
7. Get started immediately on important tasks.
8. Reduce meeting time.
9. Take time to plan.
10. Learn to say "no."

By applying the ten tips listed above, we can use our time far more productively. This in turn will help us cope with overly stressful situations that place undue physical or psychological demands on us. Along with interpersonal problems, either at home or at work, time management problems have been identified as a major source of stress. By adopting time management and establishing priorities, we can learn to control the sources of stress more effectively. Also, for our own increased effectiveness and personal well-being, we should work toward identifying those personal and organizational goals that will provide balance in our daily lives.

Ten Ways To Slow Down And Gain Time

"Feeling rushed is one of the major contributors to stress at work, which we feel is the No. 1 problem in America today."
-Dr. Paul J. Rosch,
President, American
Institute of Stress
Yonkers, N.Y.

Since time is life, anything that contributes to or serves to enhance your health is good time management.

Feeling harried and hurried due to time pressures can generate harmful stress and tension.

If you feel rushed, whether on the job or at home, slow down to gain time and get more out of your life. Specifically, here are 10 ways to reduce strain and make more healthful use of your time:

1. Take breaks. Don't do any single thing, in the same place, for long periods. Alter your position. Go for a walk. Change the pace of what you're doing.

2. Switch tasks from time to time. Do something mental for awhile then change to a physical activity and vice versa.

3. Think "effectiveness" not "efficiency." Focus your attention and effort on doing the right tasks well, based on your objectives and priorities. Avoid the "busyness trap." Always make the best use of your time in terms of the payoff. It makes no sense to spend $50 worth of your time to get a $2.98 return.

4. Delegate as much as you can to others. Only do what's in your best interest to do, as it fits into the general routine. Before starting a job, ask yourself, "Is this work really necessary and must I do it?"

5. Break big tasks into small parts which can be completed in phases. Rest up between phases, as your body tells you (when apathy, boredom, fatigue, irritability, or the like begins to set in).

6. Take some time for yourself. Time to exercise, to play, to think, to plan, and so forth. Strive for the right balance among work, play, and love.

7. Work smarter, not harder. Look constantly for shortcuts and ways to streamline what you do and how you do it. Never get in the "this is the way I (or we) have always done it" rut. A fact of life is that there's always a better way to do things.

8. Make your prime time work for you and not against you. Know the time when you're at your best mentally and physically--morning, afternoon, or evening. Also, know the time you feel most comfortable dealing with people. Try to concentrate the time you work best on important tasks; i.e., those projects that require creativity, deep thought, and imagination. Use the time you like working with people to interact with others. Do such things as make telephone calls, attend meetings, see visitors, etc.

9. Adapt to your environment and situation. Recognize that you cannot control everything. When you're faced with something beyond your influence, say the prayer of serenity:

   God, grant me the serenity
   To accept the things I cannot change
   The courage to change the things I can
   And the wisdom to know the difference.

10. Get away for awhile. Take a minimum of a week off from your job at least once a year (and a day off here and there throughout the year).

quiet time

Reprinted from
"The Personnel Administrator"

Merrill E. Douglass and
Donna N. Douglass

Quiet Time Increases Productivity

Most people who work in offices find their days hectic, fragmented and generally frustrating. They have numerous important things to do, but an endless stream of interruptions makes it difficult to complete them. The constant start-and-stop-and-restart pattern stretches jobs out longer than necessary and often reduces the quality of performance. It is reasonable to guess that these interruptions partially explain the findings of three independent surveys last year which found that the average office worker wastes 45 percent of the day. Incredible! We seem to accomplish about half of what we should be able to accomplish with a working day.

Of the many ideas advanced to solve this problem, one of the simplest and most effective steps is often ignored. A good quiet time policy could be a useful effort toward recovering part of that lost time. It is easy to do and costs nothing.

What, exactly, is "Quiet Time"? The concept of quiet time means time is set aside during which only emergency interruptions are allowed. Messages are taken so telephone calls can be returned later. Regular callers can be asked to call after the quiet time. No meetings are scheduled. People are not wandering around chatting with others. Particularly distracting jobs, such as running ditto machines, are delayed until later. The objective of a quiet hour is simple: create an uninterrupted block of time so people can concentrate on an important task.

What do people actually do during their quiet time? They think. They plan. They get organized. They are commonly observed doing analytical jobs, writing reports, or working on tasks which require creative skills. In general, the biggest gain seems to be finishing a task within the quiet hour which would otherwise take perhaps two or three hours to complete.

Many people assume that finding a quiet time is impossible. They frequently claim they have an "open" office and that anyone must be free to see anyone else at any time. They'd love to have a quiet hour but claim, "It can't be done in my office!" Of course, if they believe it can't be done – it can't.

On the other hand, countless numbers have just gone ahead and implemented a quiet time. Some have waited until the point of total frustration before taking this important step. Others have realized its advantages before their office situation had totally deteriorated. In all cases, the results are the same: employees at all levels have unanimously applauded the move to a quiet time.

Individuals can, and do, implement quiet time on their own, but the greatest benefits occur when groups do it together. An entire office, department, division, or company can help make all employees successful when they observe quiet time as a unit. Everyone should be included. When everyone in the office is making a special effort to do their work quietly and not bother their co-workers, the level of internal office interruptions is greatly reduced. External interruptions are minimized where possible. The greater the number of interruptions which are eliminated during this quiet period, the more work will be successfully accomplished.

To successfully implement a quiet hour in your office, follow these 10 steps:

1. Secure firm commitment from top management of the unit concerned.
2. Explain the concept to managers and supervisors, focusing on the benefits.
3. Discuss the concept at staff meetings to develop consensus and commitment.
4. Determine what time period is most appropriate. (Most companies choose 8 to 9 a. m. This is frequently the lowest activity level anyway.)
5. Draw up operating guidelines.
6. Try a pilot project first.
7. Monitor results and solve problems as they arise.
8. Evaluate results of the pilot projects and modify policies as required.
9. Implement quiet time policy for the entire organization.
10. Keep exceptions to a minimum.

Start the wheels moving today. Plan your approach to top management and illustrate the positive value of a quiet time policy. Everyone will find this simple new procedure exactly what they need to get a stronger handle on the important work they must accomplish.□

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When the job seems IMPOSSIBLE!

by Mary King

What should you do when you come to the awful, pit-in-the-stomach conclusion that you simply can't do the job you've been assigned? The abyss is at your feet; the bread line looms. You break out in a cold sweat. The hour of reckoning is near. What you really want to do is hide until the whole hideous situation goes away.

It's not likely to, however, so take a deep breath and try to think clearly.

Before taking any action, relax for a few minutes and be sure your judgment is based on reason, not panic. Double-check the assignment, and try to think of another way of attacking the job that's easier or less time-consuming. If possible, ask advice from someone who has a similar job or who has held your job in the past.

If you remain convinced the assignment is too much for you, tell your boss as soon as possible. Whether you expect understanding or anger, be sure your superior understands the situation while there's still time to make other arrangements. If you postpone the unpleasant meeting, he or she will be furious about the delay, in addition to being angry about the job not getting done.

Dealing with the problem as soon as possible will spare you a lot of tension and anguish. You may even get instant relief if the person in charge realizes he made a mistake by giving you the job in the first place. Your boss might also temporarily relieve you of some or all of your usual duties so that you can concentrate on this particular project.

If you're reluctant to confront your superior with the bad news, keep in mind that most bosses dislike surprises more than they dislike incompetence. According to a survey conducted by John Sullivan, a professor at Georgia State University, employers mention failure to make a deadline more frequently than incompetence in discussing the negative traits of workers.

How should you go about telling the bitter truth to your unsuspecting boss? Keep your focus on the most important thing—getting the job done.

A maximum of clear thinking and a minimum of panic will make the heaviest workload manageable.

Above all, express willingness to do everything within your capability. There's nothing like a liberal glob of enthusiasm to please the boss! Appear confident. This is no time for hand-wringing. Don't try to shift the blame, and save any complaints until the crisis has passed.

Once you've explained why you can't do the assignment, take the initiative and try to come up with some constructive suggestions. For example, if you're not experienced enough on the computer system to complete a complicated report involving graphs and charts in the time allotted, volunteer to do the text and the proofreading while someone else tackles the complex graphs and detailed charts. Maybe an hour or two of help from a co-worker could provide a critical boost.

Perhaps hiring a temporary worker or farming out xeroxing to a copy center will solve your problem. If you can't work the overtime, you might know someone in the company who can do the job and would love the extra money.

Even if one of your possible solutions is expensive or unorthodox, you should not hesitate to suggest it. Let your boss decide on the priority of the project.

Once the pressure is off, try to figure out why the situation came up and whether it's likely to arise again. If the incident pointed out a weakness of yours, try to correct it, even if you have to do it in your own time. Try to anticipate other troublesome situations arising in the future and make sure you have the skills and know-how to deal with them. If the crisis arose because you procrastinated when things were slow, you may now be able to correct that bad habit.

If the problem occurred because of a misunderstanding of what your job entails, talk with your boss and get the details of your responsibilities nailed down.

If you were seriously at fault in the situation, you may be in for some trouble once the crisis is over. If, for instance, you provided false information on your résumé or never signed up for required training, you may be running into rough weather. But how you handled yourself when it came to the crunch will probably determine whether you get through the storm in your career. ◆

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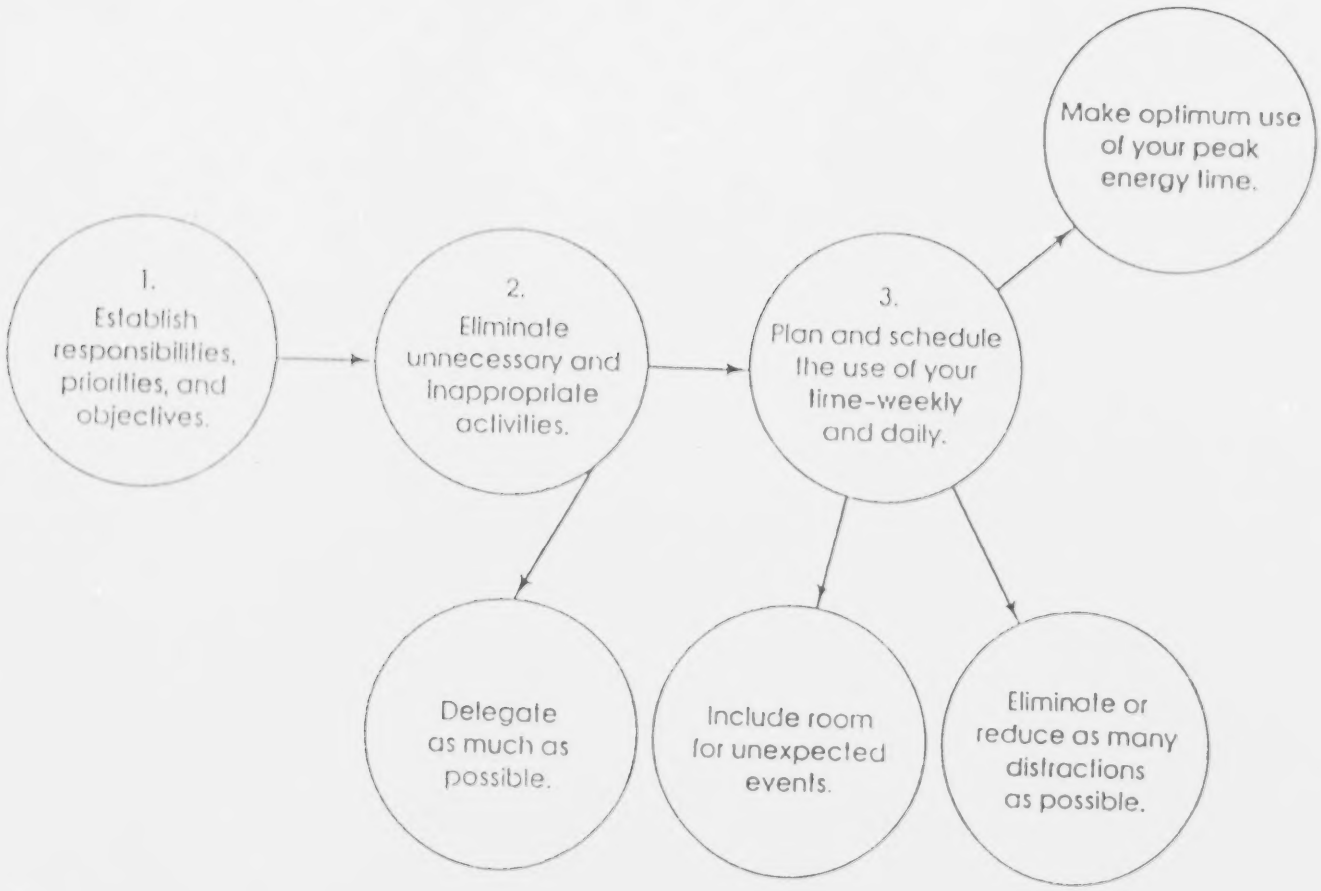
HOW TO CONTROL YOUR USE OF TIME


1. Establish responsibilities, priorities, and objectives.
2. Eliminate unnecessary and inappropriate activities.
3. Plan and schedule the use of your time-weekly and daily.
Make optimum use of your peak energy time.
Delegate as much as possible.
Include room for unexpected events.
Eliminate or reduce as many distractions as possible.

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THERE IS ALWAYS TIME TO DO WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO YOU.

THE DIFFICULT PART IS IN KNOWING WHAT IS IMPORTANT.

RESOLVING CONFLICT IN YOUR OFFICE

Conflict is inevitable whether an office consists of two people or ten thousand people. However, with your attitude tuned to "positive", your value as a problem solver *among people* has unlimited potential.

Here are some standard sources of conflict found in the workplace. For each category, write a brief example of conflict you have personally observed:

SOURCES OF CONFLICT

—An organization whose structure encourages conflict (perhaps by making workers compete against each other for special rewards).

(Your example) _____

—Aggressive co-workers _____

—Competition for resources (i.e. only one computer for three workers)

_____

—Power struggles (i.e. who will head the new department)

_____

—Organizational change (People use many tricks to avoid changing comfortable routines)

_____

—Unresolved previous conflicts (even when the current issue should present no problems, previous grudges may interfere)

_____

—DIFFERENCES in

Facts and assumptions _____

Customs and habits _____

Goals and expectations _____

Roles _____

Methods and styles _____

RESOLVING CONFLICT (6 EASY STEPS)

Anticipating conflict (and knowing its causes, as you just listed) is one of the best ways of heading off a situation *before it erupts*. When a conflict exists, either for you, or among people in your organization, try using the following steps to maintain a positive environment.

1. **Schedule a meeting with the other party.** Decide on a time and place to sit down and discuss differences. That way you have each made a gesture toward resolution. *Example: Debra, your department bookkeeper, resists your requests for statistics you need to include in regular reports. Think about the ideal time and place to meet with her, and say, "We need to talk about our working relationship and how it can be improved."*

2. **Evaluate the cause.** First acknowledge that there is a conflict. (Not admitting there's a problem makes it worse.) Talk non-judgmentally about the reasons for your differences.

3. **Use "I" messages.** Say "I thought you wanted this," or "I heard you to say that." In this way, you avoid destructive accusations. Here is a pattern for an "I" message:

I _____ when you _____ which causes _____
(feel, react) (act, do)

_____
(consequences)

4. **Encourage the other person to express his or her feelings.** Ask questions that draw out what the other person is thinking. Use phrases like "I would like your reaction to what happened," or "I would like to hear your reasons." In our example, the bookkeeper might say that she had no idea of the importance of the reports you worked on, or who needed the figures. She might also point out that you are often late giving her the information she needs for the report. The idea is to let the other party know that you are *truly listening carefully to his or her opinions.*

5. **Structure your desired outcome.** Negotiate! Be sure that you each contribute to the "solution" and feel satisfied that it is at least worth trying. (Not every problem is going to be solved overnight but progress can usually be made, even on those that are most difficult.) Some people like to write down agreements; but for most office situations, a handshake symbolizes mutual respect and agreement to work toward a solution.

6. **Evaluate.** It's a good idea to set a definite time in the future (a week, a month, etc.) to evaluate the solution.

When you successfully negotiate a conflict, using the above guidelines, you will be amazed at how powerful you feel! Your power is *not* to push other people around, but to improve communications with those who may have different views.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION EXERCISE

Answer the following questions:

With whom do you have (or currently have) a conflict?	What is the essence of this conflict?
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

Choose one of your examples and complete the following questions:

1) How could you apply the "Six steps of conflict resolution" (explained on the two previous pages) for this conflict?

2) What happens if you choose not to express yourself?

ACHIEVING BALANCE

INTELLECTUAL

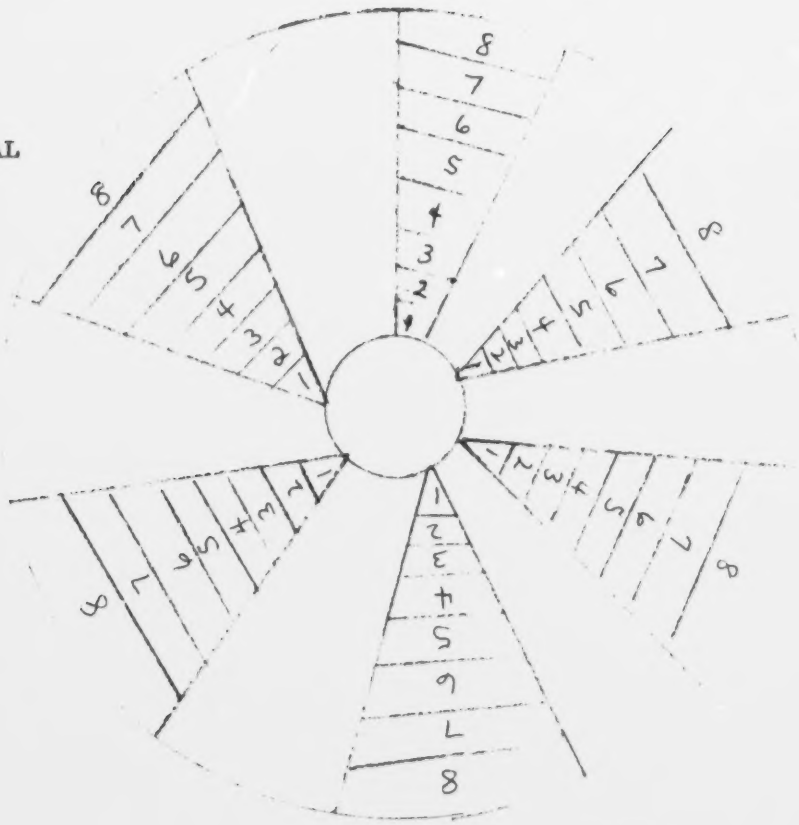
EMOTIONAL

SOCIAL

PHYSICAL

SEXUAL

SPIRITUAL



LIFE BALANCE WHEEL

HOW STRESSFUL IS YOUR JOB

Circle the one that applies to you. 0 - Does not apply (No); 1 - Bothers me a little; 2,3,4,5 - Bothers me a lot.

1.	Deadlines are a daily part of my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Work assignments are hard to complete because of the many interruptions	0	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I usually have to work through lunch (if yes circle 5)	0	1	2	3	4	5
4.	After leaving work, I usually have to do other job related material to finish that I was unable to do during the day.	0	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Some of my co-workers are difficult to work with	0	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My skills need to be updated through classes	0	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I find it hard to realize the meaning of my job	0	1	2	3	4	5
8.	My work environment is not pleasant	0	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I'm constantly accepting more responsibilities while continuing with those I already have	0	1	2	3	4	5
10.	My job has little challenge or variety	0	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I've recently been given a promotion (if yes, circle 5)	0	1	2	3	4	5
12.	My job often makes me feel overwhelmed	0	1	2	3	4	5
13.	The environment at work is noisy	0	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I feel I should be more satisfied with what I have accomplished at my job	0	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I have a tendency to lose my temper when I am under pressure	0	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I am uncomfortable when in the presence of my boss	0	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I wish there was more closeness among my co-workers ...	0	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I would be more comfortable if I felt more confident about my occupation	0	1	2	3	4	5
19.	My job is emotionally demanding	0	1	2	3	4	5
20.	There is extensive preparation and training required for my job (if yes, circle 5)	0	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I have lost enthusiasm for my job	0	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I have been in the same job for 5 years or more (if yes, circle 5)	0	1	2	3	4	5

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23.	My job has aspects pf "busy work" which I often find myself caught up in	0	1	2	3	4	5
24.	The thought of retirement and a new life is difficult for me to anticipate	0	1	2	3	4	5
25.	It is difficult for me to relax during breaks when I take them	0	1	2	3	4	5
26.	When I get to work it takes me more time than I have to prepare for the day	0	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I tend to rehash my problems of the day on my way to and from work	0	1	2	3	4	5
28.	My Job is physically demanding	0	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Immediate involvement in a work project is often difficult for me.	0	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I work at home, I do not get week-ends off (if yes, circle 5)	0	1	2	3	4	5
31.	When bombarded with questions from all directions, I cannot answer or make a decision	0	1	2	3	4	5
32.	My goal of being the perfect parent, spouse and employee concerns me.	0	1	2	3	4	5
33.	When I get home from work I still have the laundry, cooking, cleaning and shopping to do	0	1	2	3	4	5
34.	I like my work, but feel guilty when I put in extra hours	0	1	2	3	4	5
35.	My work is at home so I cannot walk out and leave it night (if yes, circle 5)	0	1	2	3	4	5

A) If your score is below 20, you are probably dealing effectively with the pressure of work. Congratulations!

B) If your score is between 20 and 60, this is an area you should examine more closely. Your stress level is high enough that you could in the near future experience some physical or mental signs of distress.

C) If your score is over 60, work stress is signaling danger ahead! Exceeding this level should be a serious warning to you. Don't delay in taking action!

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PROBLEM SOLVING

1) DEFINE THE PROBLEM

2) LIST SOLUTIONS, ALTERNATIVES .... IF YOU CAN'T FIND AT LEAST THREE .... BRAINSTORM.

3) EVALUATE AND DECIDE WHICH SOLUTION YOU WILL WORK ON ... AND DO IT.

4) FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION.

.....TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE ... THIS SHOULD BE WRITTEN DOWN AND REVIEWED DAILY.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

If you choose not to use the Problem-Solving Technique to help you deal with the stress and stressors in your life, don't rationalize that you have no choice and must continue to live this stressful life.

What you may be doing is:

* Choosing to live this way - because you see it as more rewarding. (i.e: money, prestige).- rather than changing even if your life would be stressful.

* Not understanding or not looking for any alternatives or solutions to your present lifestyle.

* Being more fearful of an unknown alternative or solution rather than acknowledging that your present lifestyle is causing you misery.

Problem-Solving means you may have to try a lot of solutions, alternatives or techniques to find out which one is best for you, your personality and your circumstances. The more you practice a specific skill, the more effectively you can deal with it.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management problems? Here are a few tips that can help you get your day in order.

1. Make a daily "To Do" list and put them in order of priority.
2. Set realistic time limits and/or deadlines.
3. Schedule on your daily list time for interruptions and routine work.
4. Make phone call at set times only (i.e. before 9:30 and after 3:30)
5. Don't wait "on hold."
6. Sort mail by priority and handle each piece only once.
7. Use phone instead of letter/memo whenever possible.
8. Hold meetings just before lunch.
9. Go to lunch at 1:00 p.m.
10. Use an agenda at meetings.
11. Find and use your "best time."
12. Don't procrastinate.
13. Don't take work home at night.
14. Keep work area neat.

Since everything is but an apparition,
Perfect in being what it is,
Having nothing to do with good or bad,
Acceptance or rejection,
One may well burst out in laughter.

PLUG INTO YOUR OWN POSITIVE POWER AND WATCH WHAT HAPPENS!

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU

Laughed till your sides hurt? Describe the event.

Made someone else laugh, smile? Describe the event.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME SOMEONE

Made you laugh till your face hurt? Who? Where?

Made you laugh at yourself, each other?

HUMOR IS THE HIGH ROAD INTO AND THROUGH TRANSFORMATION.

DAILY DRILL FOR EYES

1. Morning warmup: Deep breathing, stretches, face massage, swinging of arms, tapping head, neck-loosening exercises.

2. Sun: Face the sun for five minutes, four times daily, with eyes CLOSED.

3. Palming: Rub hands together and cover face and eyes gently. Once a week, palm for 30 minutes to music; in your mind's eye, allow yourself to have perfect vision. Visualize in color, depth, movement.

4. Swing: Swing arms vigorously back and forth three times daily, 3 minutes each time. Relax in between.

5. Count: Objects, colors, shoes, patterns, in quick easy glances.

6. Edge: Slowly trace outlines of objects, especially at the distance you cannot see clearly. Allow illusion of apparent motion in the direction opposite to that in which your eyes are moving.

7. Play games of movement without glasses: ping pong, catch, frisbee, Kadima, etc.. Follow movement with eyes and hand.

8. Thumb or pencil: hold at arm's length, bring slowly toward your eyes staring fixedly at thumb or eraser till image doubles or blurs, then close eyes softly and blink. 3 times.

Expand your "vision" of life and you will be able to see more. Receive the gift of light. Relax. Trust yourself. Forgive. Give thanks. These attitudes open your sight. When you are sunning, let the warmth go all the way through to the back of your head. Let it go all the way through you, melting all resistance to everything. After a few minutes, turn away from light, open your eyes slowly, blink softly, look into the blur. Don't try to see better. Better sight will find its way to you.

Massage gently with flat part of thumb, your cheek bones, sweeping in outward direction. Now same with eyebrow bones, sweeping outwards. Gently massage your temples with third fingers both hands. These exercises are most useful when done before headache and sinus discomfort take over. Rotate head fully, slowly with loose jaw. Be aware of your breath throughout all exercises, even, steady. If there is any strain anywhere, anytime, stop.

Pyramid: Make triangle with hands, stretch arms to the fullest, very slowly make complete circle keeping gaze and concentration in the triangle or pyramid or your hands. Once in each direction. Repeat twice.

QUIZ 3--ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM BURNOUT?

Answer YES or NO to the following questions:

1. Do you tire easily? Feel fatigued rather than energetic?
2. Are you working harder and harder and accomplishing less and less?
3. Are you increasingly cynical and disenchanted?
4. Are you often invaded by a sadness you can't explain?
5. Are you forgetting about appointments, deadlines, or personal possessions?
6. Are you increasingly irritable? More short-tempered? More disappointed in the people around you?
7. Are you seeing close friends and family members less frequently?
8. Are you too busy to do even routine things like making phone calls, reading reports, or sending out cards?
9. Are you suffering from physical complaints--aches, pains, headaches, a lingering cold?
10. Is joy elusive?
11. Are you unable to laugh at a joke about yourself?
12. Does sex seem like more trouble than it's worth?

RX FOR BURNOUT

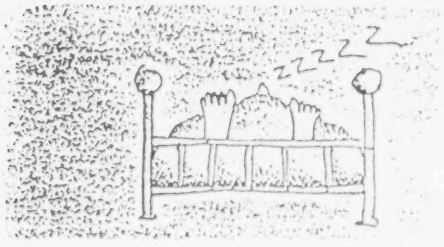
Here are 20 suggestions for beating burnout. Even if you have no symptoms of impending trouble, you may find that some of these suggestions are meant for you.

1

Deal with problems when they occur, if you can. Don't let them pile up.

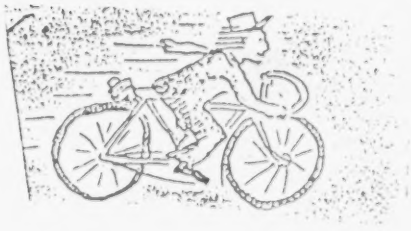
2

Go to bed to sleep, not to worry or brood. If you find you are in a bad mood at bedtime, take a walk, read a chapter of a book that gives you pleasure, talk to someone you love about the good things in your life, watch something funny on TV.



3

Find a tensional outlet that works for you and use it when you need to. Also try to build in fresh air and exercise--crossword puzzles, card games, running, dancing, walking, bicycling.



4

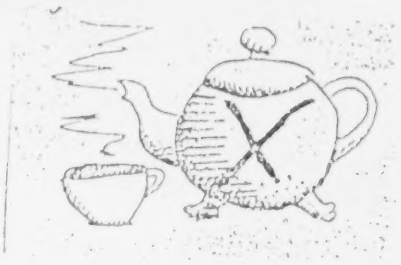
Spend time with people you care about. Learn about the activities and sports they enjoy.

5

Never eat while stewing about work.

6

Limit your intake of coffee, tea, sweets, junk foods, and foods that do not agree with you. Cut down on the number of aspirins, antacids, or tranquilizers.

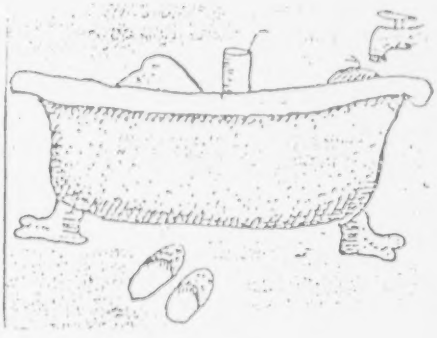


7

Try not to get caught up in daily exchanges of complaints with colleagues. It makes everyone feel worse.

8

After work RELAX by taking a bubblebath or hot shower. Avoid sitting in front of the TV or lying on the couch.



9

Make a list of the things you can't stand about your job. Review it later to find out what the real problems are. Then try to overcome them.

10

Keep other people's problems separate from your own.

11

Think about what you can control in your work life and what you can't. Let go of the things you can't affect.

12

Get up 15 or 20 minutes earlier than usual to read the newspaper, jog, take a short walk, give your houseplants a little special attention, and MOST IMPORTANT prepare a healthy breakfast.

13

Schedule time to be alone.

14

At lunchtime find a comfortable, isolated place and enjoy the peace and quiet. Close your eyes and concentrate on relaxing all your muscles, beginning with your toes. Doing this for 10 to 20 minutes a day can do wonders for a tired, overworked mind and body.

15

Try to leave your work and work worries at work.

16

Take a weekend vacation.

17

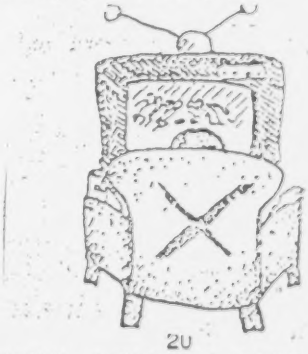
Reward yourself for all the good work you have been doing. Buy a new outfit, go to the movies or to your favorite restaurant.

18

Breath slowly, and pay attention to the air going in and out.

19

Go to a sad movie or watch a sad movie on TV and let yourself cry a lot. Then figure out why you cried a lot.



20

LAUGH! LAUGH! LAUGH!

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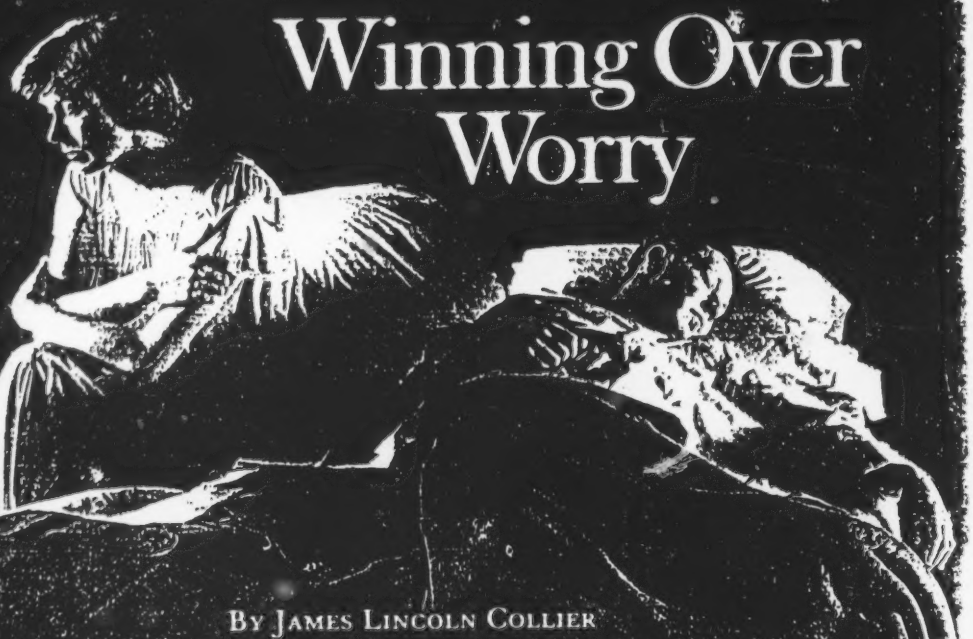
Here are some tested, proven ways to get your mind back on a productive track

Winning Over Worry



By James Lincoln Collier

"I've been a chronic worrier all my life. I'd sit there at my desk worrying about a problem in my business, and then I'd begin to worry about going bankrupt. That would lead to worrying about how I was going to support myself, about what I would do in my old age. It would just spiral up."

In his mid-30s, wealthy, chairman of a national insurance company, this man would seem to be someone who has nothing to worry about. Yet worry he did, until recently. "If I didn't have business problems, I'd find something else to worry about," he says. "I guess I was spending half my day worrying, and half the night too. I was losing so much sleep that I was tired all the time, and my productivity was falling off."

Everybody worries, but a handful of social scientists who came to focus on this topic while studying insomnia are now saying that most of the worrying we do serves no pur-

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pose. More than that, they are telling us that we can learn to worry less.

These researchers have found that worriers like the insurance executive experience the phenomenon of the "racing mind." "The flow of worrisome thoughts is relentless and seems unstoppable," says Thomas Borkovec, a psychologist at Pennsylvania State University and one of the pioneers in worry research. Typically, a person might begin by worrying whether his car needs new brakes. Next he sees the brakes failing and the car knocking down a child. This leads to a vision of himself in court, in financial ruin, with his family on welfare.

Put this way it sounds amusing, but to the worrier it is far from funny. With ever-increasing worries come muscle tension, upset stomach, anxiety and depression, which can eventually lead to more serious health problems. "Worrying is circular," says Elwood Robinson, a young psychologist who heads the Worry Treatment Program at North Carolina Central University in Durham. "It builds, so you feel worse and worse." And, according to a recent study of Americans' mental health, worry is one of the few emotional problems that are on the increase in this country—for reasons that are not altogether clear.

Consider the case of a mother of two adolescent sons. Age 42, she looks 25 and has a relaxed manner—hardly someone who would seem to be a chronic worrier. She began to worry some in college. As she went on to graduate, get married, then begin teaching and having children, her worries increased. So did her physical symptoms: stomach problems, insomnia. At night she would lie in bed worrying about her children, about the students she was teaching, about whether she was doing a good job. (Low self-esteem is characteristic of worriers.) About four years ago she was feeling so much stress that she had to give up her teaching position.

Rowland Folensbee, a psychologist who heads a Houston worry clinic, says that this pattern is common. "Some people are not worriers at first, but *become* worriers. They find that their worry incubates. It is fired off by more and more distant triggers." Where they might once have worried about paying a bill, they'll eventually worry about paying for things they haven't even bought yet. Folensbee has had patients so prone to worry that they decide not to undergo treatment because the prospect "worries" them too much.

Worry, as these researchers define it, is what the mind does while the body is feeling anxious or tense. Says Folensbee, "It's very difficult to have an empty mind—not to think about anything at all." Worrying seems to give the tense person "something to do." According to Borkovec, such a person feels that the worry is "part of me, what I do

all the time. Not to be doing that makes me uncomfortable because it's not myself."

Everybody worries at one time or another, but there are what Folensbee calls "grades of tendency to worry." According to Borkovec's estimates, 30 percent of us are nonworriers, 15 percent are chronic worriers, and the rest of us fall somewhere in between. All of the researchers feel that it isn't so much a question of how much you worry, but whether it is causing problems—costing you sleep, distracting you at work or school, or often making you feel bad.

The first task in reducing worry is to recognize when you are worrying. The second step is to interrupt this worry before it can build.

Folensbee asks clients who suddenly realize they're worrying to focus on an object—something positive—and carefully describe it to themselves. The theory is that the mind cannot hang on to two thought processes at once.

"Imaging" can help stop the worry spiral. A person worrying about a plane trip might see himself getting airsick or the plane crashing; instead, he should work up images of a smiling flight attendant and the interesting people he'll meet—replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. "We're trying to get people to think more realistically about the things that worry them," Robinson says. "We have people who worry endlessly about their schoolwork, yet they have always done well. We say to them, 'Look, have you ever flunked a course before?' "

Another technique that Robinson suggests is "relaxation training"—going over each muscle group one by one, tensing and releasing them, helping them to relax. Whatever the technique, the point is to halt the worry cycle. People learn to do this surprisingly quickly. Usually within a week or so they have reduced markedly the time they spend worrying. "Worry is a habit," Borkovec says. "To counteract that habit we need substitute habits."

Finding substitutes is half the plan. The second half is a concept not unlike the religious tradition of prayer. Put aside a period each day when you sit down and deliberately worry about things on your mind. It is easier for most people to stop worrying during the day and concentrate on productive thoughts if they tell themselves that they'll have a chance to get back to the worry later.

The period of deliberate worry also seems to burn away the worry. Exactly how this works isn't understood, but psychologists have long known about the phenomenon of "habituation" with regard to stimuli: if you smell corned beef and cabbage for a while, you stop smelling it. In the same way, worry tends to decrease during this period of enforced worry.

Researchers agree that the worry period ought to be 30 minutes long. Don't use your favorite living-room chair, because the associations

might make you start worrying every time you sit there. Nor should you have your worry period just before bed. Folensbee has his clients write down their worries to help them concentrate. The chairman of the insurance company does his worrying between 5 and 5:30 in the afternoon. He shuts his door, turns on a low light, and lies down with pad and pencil.

Some people insist that worry is useful, but there is an important difference, the researchers say, between worrying and problem-solving. "Instead of fretting endlessly over negative outcomes, we should look for positive solutions," Robinson says.

The new worry programs are able to reduce worry in many clients by nearly 50 percent. Some benefit a great deal, others less so. Such a program can be followed at home, without formal training in a clinic, using the three basic steps:

1. Learn to recognize immediately when you've started on a worry cycle.

2. Interrupt the worry cycle by imaging, concentrating on another, positive object, or relaxing. Tell yourself you'll have a chance to worry later.

3. Set aside a 30-minute worry period each day, and stick to it.

Chances of success are better if someone checks to see whether you're following the techniques and reminds you to keep at it. Folensbee says, "People start coming up with excuses—'My child has been sick, and I couldn't find time for my worry period,' and so forth. This program is effective when applied for several weeks, but the basis for it is continued application." Another caution: the worry period *must* be 30 minutes long. The researchers have discovered that a shorter worry period might actually *increase* the amount you worry. (Researchers can't explain this phenomenon yet, but it shows up clearly in their studies.)

Nobody will ever stop worrying completely, but many people can learn to worry much less. The insurance-company executive has. Last year he worried about everything. Now, he says, "When I get into my worry session, half the time I can't even come up with something to worry about."

Reprints of this article are available. See page 238.

Switch Hit

I ONCE WORKED the front desk of a hotel that hosted a convention of Mensa, a group whose prerequisite for membership is a high I.Q. On one occasion, a member asked me a question, and in replying I addressed him by name. "Young lady," he said in amazement, "how did you remember my name among the hundreds of people here?"

"Sir," I confessed, "I read your name tag." —Contributed by J. P.

IMPORTANT WALKING FACTS

* Walking is the number one participant sport in America.

  53 million people walk for physical fitness, according to a recent National Sporting Goods Association survey.

* Walking is a healthy, natural function of the human body.

  Because of the structure, shape and flexibility of the spine, the body is better suited for walking than for sitting, standing or running.

* Fitness walking is more than just walking for fitness.

  Simply defined, fitness walking is walking at a brisk enough pace to maintain your heart rate in the target training zone. Fitness walking is the cornerstone of a total approach to personal fitness that uses walking as the major exercise, but also includes improving strength and flexibility, paying attention to diet, and reducing stress. With fitness walking, the goal is to develop a training program that will strengthen your heart. There isn't any magical overall fitness formula that is right for everyone; it's all tailored to the individual's ability and level of fitness. And fitness walking is virtually an injury-free exercise, with a very low participant drop-out rate.

* Walking speeds vary greatly.

  For a person in reasonably good health, a normal walking pace is between 3.0 and 3.5 MPH. 3.75 to 4.0 MPH is considered a brisk pace, although speeds of up to 5.5 MPH are not unusual for well-conditioned athletes. For most people, anything below 3.0 is slow.

* Regular walking can help you lose weight.

  Fitness walking burns virtually the same number of calories as running a comparable distance: the average 150 pound individual burns 100 calories when he or she walks a mile. Over the course of a year, the individual who walks 45 minutes a day at 4 MPH, given the same caloric intake, can lose 18 pounds. Fitness walking has proven particularly effective in reducing the body fat as a percentage of overall body weight.

* Walking may produce more overall health benefits than running.

  Walking improves cardiovascular efficiency, may lower blood pressure, relieves stress, reduces body fat, strengthens leg and abdominal muscles and may improve the quality of sleep. Moreover biomechanics studies have demonstrated that the foot lands with only 1-1/2 times the force of body weight in walking, while it may exceed three times body weight in running; thus, walking poses much less risk of orthopedic injury. Walking is truly an ideal sport for consistent, life-long aerobic conditioning.

* Fitness walking is especially beneficial to the cardiovascular system.

  By expending 2,000 calories a week in vigorous exercise, participation in a fitness walking program can significantly reduce the risk of heart attack. Indeed, fitness walking is frequently incorporated into a comprehensive cardiac rehabilitation program. And by walking briskly three times a week for 30 minutes, virtually anyone can increase his or her cardiovascular fitness by 8 to 15 percent.

* Walking improves both muscle tone and strength.

  Walking tones and strengthens calves, thighs, ankles, feet, as well as arms, shoulders, abdomen, hips and buttocks. Edward Payson Weston, the world's premier walker at the turn of the century and the "Father of Pedestrians", wrote that walking was... "like a perfect massage; it will ease and relax the muscles. But unlike a massage, it will also strengthen them".

* Walking is inexpensive.

  The only equipment needed for proper walking is a pair of comfortable, well-cushioned shoes that offer proper heel and arch support.

* Walking is the oldest exercise known to man, but until now, one of the least studied.

  Walking has been around about as long as the human species, and it has always been the main form of transportation; but only now, when the health and mental benefits of walking are finally becoming apparent, has there been a concerted, scientific effort to study walking. Today, there are over 1,000 walking clubs in the United States alone, plus dozens of exercise physiology labs and programs.

** These facts are provided courtesy of the Rockport Walking Institute of Marlboro, Massachusetts.

Nature's
Perfect Medicine